

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, /PDIP, IN, PK

SUBJECT: RESTORATION OF INDO-PAK RAIL TIES

REF: NEW DELHI 10682

1. JULY 23 DELHI PRESS HEADLINED THE INAUGURATION OF RAIL SERVICE BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN AFTER A BREAK OF ELEVEN YEARS. AMONG THE HEADLINES WERE "INDO-PAK AMITY BACK ON RAILS" (NATIONAL HERALD)," "INDO-PAK RAIL LINK BRINGS JOY TO MANY HEARTS" (TIMES OF INDIA), AND "LAHORE EXPRESS BRIDGES A DECADE" (THE STATESMAN). MOST PAPERS CARRIED FRONT-PAGE PHOTOS OF AMRITSAR-LAHORE EXPRESS PASSING THROUGH INDIAN BORDER TOWN OF ATTARI ON ITS MAIDEN RUN. LEAD ARTICLES EMPHASIZED HUMAN INTEREST ASPECT OF RAIL SERVICE RESTORATION. IT WAS NOW EASIER AND CHEAPER FOR PEOPLE TO VISIT THEIR RELATIVES ON EITHER SIDE OF THE BORDER. MANY OF THE PASSENGERS ON THE FIRST TRAIN TO LAHORE WERE PAKISTANIS RETURNING FROM VISITS WITH THEIR RELATIVES IN INDIA. WELCOMING THE TRAIN AT ATTARI, UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR RAILWAYS QURESHI SAID THAT THE TRAIN WAS CARRYING A "MESSAGE OF PEACE, LOVE AND GOODWILL TO OUR NEIGHBOUR PAKISTAN."

2. THE HINDUSTAN TIMES SAID EDITORIALY THAT "WITH THE
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 10776 231328Z

REOPENING OF THE RAILWAY LINE, RESTORATION OF TRADE, SHIPPING,

TELECOMMUNICATION AND POSTAL LINKS- NOT TO MENTION THE RESUMPTION OF DIRECT AIR SERVICES AND THE ARRIVAL OF THE RESPECTIVE AMBASADORS-DESIGNATE - THE SIMLA SPIRIT CAN BE SAID TO BE IN FULL SWAY. THE KRUX OF THE APPROACH EXEMPLIFIED AT SIMLA WAS THAT BILATERALISM SHOULD GOVERN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. IT MEANT THAT OUTSIDE POWERS AND AGENCIES, HOWEVER BENEVOLENT THEIR MOTIVES MIGHT BE, SHOULD NOT HAVE A SAY IN SORTING OUT MUTUAL DIFFERENCES IN PROMOTING FRIENDSHIP."

3. THE PRO-CONGRSS (NEHRU FAMILY TRUST) NATIONAL HERALD COMMENTED THAT "THE CREDIT FOR THIS HAPPY TURN OF EVENTS SHOULD GO TO THE LEADERS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES. INDIRA GANDHI HAS CONSISTENTLY ADVOCATED PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP... MR. BHUTTO USED TO VACILLATE BUT THAT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE. UNLIKE THE INDIAN PRIME MINISTER, HE FACED A HOST OF INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND HE HAD TO PLAY TO THE GALLERY." NONETHELESS, THE HERALD CONTINUES, "WHATEVER HIS EARLIER STAND ON INDO-PAKISTANI TIES, MR. BHUTTO SEEMS TO BE CONVINCED THAT COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, NOT WAR, IS THE PROPER COURSE... IT WILL BE NO MEAN GAIN FOR PAKISTAN IF SHE KEEPS HER DOMESTIC PROBLEMS AWAY FROM FOREIGN RELATIONS. IN THIS RESPECT, MR. BHUTTO IS GIVING A NEW DIRECTION TO HIS COUNTRY, AND HE DESERVES PRAISE."SAXBE

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